

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Office action dated February 10, 2011 has been received and carefully considered. By this amendment, the specification and claims 1, 4-5, 8, 10-11, and 13 are amended. No new claims were added. After entry of this amendment, claims 1-20 will be pending. In view of the amendments and the following remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration.

Claim Objection

The office objected to claim 1 for an informality. Applicant amended claim 1 according to the examiner's suggestion.

35 USC §102

The Office maintained the prior rejection of claims 1, 3-5, 8-9, 11-13, and 18-19 under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by Wilkinson et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 7,155,931). The applicant once more respectfully disagrees, especially in view of the amendments herein.

As amended claim 1 and claim 11 expressly require that the liquefied natural gas storage vessel is configured to allow withdrawal a liquefied natural gas liquid and a liquefied natural gas vapor. Thus, and viewed from a different perspective, the vapor and the liquid are both directly obtained from the liquefied natural gas storage vessel. Moreover, amended claims 1 and 11 also require that the fractionator feed is a combination of the fractionator bottom product that comprises the C₃ and heavier and the liquefied natural gas vapor coming from the storage vessel. Such elements are neither taught nor suggested in Wilkinson et al.

Consequently, and in view of the amendments and arguments provided above, the rejection of claims 1, 3-5, 8-9, 11-13, and 18-19 as being anticipated by Wilkinson et al. should be withdrawn.

35 USC §103

The Office also maintained the rejection of claims 2, and 14-15 under 35 USC §103(a) as being obvious over Wilkinson in view of applicant's admitted prior art. The applicant once more respectfully disagrees, especially in view of the amendments herein.

As already noted above and amended herein, it should be appreciated that the liquefied natural gas vapor in the claims is not LNG vaporized in a downstream operation, but a vapor stream directly drawn from the storage vessel. A combination of such stream with a fractionator bottom product is clearly neither motivated nor suggested I Wilkinson. Therefore, as claims 2 and 14-15 are dependent on amended claims 1 and 11, respectively, the rejection of claims 2, and 14-15 as being obvious over Wilkinson in view of applicant's admitted prior art is improper and should be withdrawn.

The Office further maintained the rejection of claims 6-7, and 16-17 under 35 USC §103 as being obvious over Wilkinson in view of Zednik (U.S. Pat. No. 6,089,022). The applicant again respectfully disagrees, especially in view of the amendments herein.

Similar to the defects noted for Wilkinson above, the rejection of claims 6-7, and 16-17 is not sustainable in light of the amendments and arguments above. A combination with Zednik fails to remedy these defects. Therefore, claims 6-7, and 16-17 should not be deemed obvious over Wilkinson in view of Zednik and the rejection should be withdrawn.

The Office also maintained the rejection of claims 10 and 20 under 35 USC §103 as being obvious over Wilkinson. The applicant respectfully disagrees. As before with respect to the defects noted for Wilkinson, the rejection of claims 10 and 20 is not sustainable in light of the amendments and arguments above. Therefore, claims 10 and 20 should not be deemed obvious over Wilkinson and the rejection should be withdrawn.

Request For Allowance

Claims 1-20 are pending in this application. The applicant requests allowance of all pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,
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Date: May 10, 2011

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